

CANTERBURY CITY COUNCIL

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

**Minutes of a meeting held on Monday, 29th June, 2009
at 7.00 pm at The Guildhall, Westgate, Canterbury**

Present: Councillor Sharp (Chairman)
Councillor H Taylor
Councillor Eden-Green (In place of Councillor A Perkins)
Councillor Fisher
Councillor R Flaherty
Councillor McMahan
Councillor Pickersgill
Councillor Steed
Councillor Vye

In attendance -

Officers: Jemma Richards - Democratic Services Officer
Ian Cooke - Head of Finance
Jim McDonald - Director of Corporate Services
Pauline Goldsack - Senior Solicitor
Roger Vick - Commercial Health Manager

(*present for part of the meeting)

138 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Councillor A Perkins.

139 SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Councillor Eden-Green attended the meeting as a substitute for Councillor A Perkins.

140 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest at the meeting.

141 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT MEETINGS

There was no public participation.

142 MEMBERS' APPROVAL OF THE STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2008/9

The Head of Finance outlined his report which asked the General Purposes Committee to approve the Statement of Accounts for 2008/9, which had been circulated to all Members of the Committee, and set out the requirements for this. The same report had been considered by the Audit Committee on 22 June 2009.

The Head of Finance explained that the Audit Commission would report back their findings on the statement of accounts to both the General Purposes Committee and the Audit Committee and that the report would be considered by both Committees in September.

The Head of Finance highlighted some of the key elements of the report including the changes to the statements that were further steps towards the introduction of International Financial Reporting Standards and the key facts. He informed Members that the pensions deficit had increased from £41.2m - not decreased as set out in the report.

Members of the Committee raised various questions on the key elements and the Statement itself and the Head of Finance clarified the issues involved. These included:

- (i) A Member asked what the effect a deficit in the Councils finances was of the decrease in the General Fund Balance.

The Head of Finance replied that the decreases in income had been anticipated last summer, and this had been taken into account in the budget for the next four years.

- (ii) A Member referred to paragraph 1.5 of the report (Changes to the 2008/9 statements), and expressed concern that it did not give a clear picture of the situation regarding Icelandic banks, as set out in Item 28 in the Statement of Accounts. It was suggested that a paragraph be added giving the principal sum of the outstanding amount.

The Director of Corporate Service replied that although he recognised the issue, this was speculative. He suggested an alternative amendment to the recommendations in the report.

The Committee Members confirmed they were happy to accept this amendment, and the decision forms part of the resolution below.

- (iii) A Member asked about the reserves listed in the statement of accounts. It was requested that a further meeting be held to clarify what the amounts were for, as they were substantial amounts.

The Head of Finance confirmed that the budget for the following year was normally discussed at the Executive meeting in November, at which time a full schedule of reserves is always attached, and Members have an opportunity to comment at that point.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the Statement of Accounts for 2008/09 be formally approved, whilst recognising issues set out in Section 28 of the financial statement in relation to the potential impact of the Icelandic bank investment and the windfall income referred to in Section 5 of the statement which is being held to cover that impact.
- (ii) That the Chairman of the Committee sign and date the accounts as required by Section 10(3) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003.

- (iii) That the determinations set out in paragraph 1.9 be formally approved.

143 REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

(a) World Heritage Site Forum

The Committee noted the appointment of Councillor Steed as the substitute representative for the World Heritage Site Forum following confirmation from the Forum about the appointment of a substitute representative.

(b) Whitstable Volunteer Centre

The Committee considered the request from the Whitstable Volunteer Centre for the appointment of a Council representative to serve on the management committee of the organisation. Councillor Seath had expressed an interest in such appointment. Following consultation with the group leaders there had been no other nominations for that position in the event of the Committee agreeing to appoint a Council representative for the organisation.

RESOLVED – That Councillor Seath be appointed as the Council's representative on the Whitstable Volunteer Centre until the annual meeting of the Council in May 2010.

144 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be held on Thursday 24 September 2009 at 7pm in the Guildhall.

145 EXTRA ITEM OF BUSINESS - HEARINGS FOR HACKNEY CARRIAGE DRIVER AND VEHICLE ISSUES

A Member expressed concern about a procedural issue relating to the recent special meetings of the General Purposes Committee to consider various issues relating to taxi drivers.

The Legal Officer agreed to investigate whether the Licensing Sub-Committee, which comprised three Members, should deal with these matters and report back at a future meeting of this Committee.

146 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED – That under Section 100(A)4 of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act or the Freedom of Information Act or both.

147 INVESTIGATION REGARDING A HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUE

(Exempt information)

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Environment and Street Scene which advised on an investigation regarding a Health and Safety issue, including possible financial issues affecting the Council as a result of the legal proceedings in this case.

RESOLVED – That the report on this case and the potential implications in carrying out the Council's statutory duty be noted.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 7.50 pm